Keep the law out of gay issues

As the once-ballyhooed boycott of Colorado over Amendment 2 fades ever further, such sanctions are losing ever more backing even among the opponents of the amendment barring gay-rights laws. Just last week, for example, gay-rights advocates meeting on the matter in Denver revealed significant strains within their own ranks. Some of them are now acknowledging as well how overall, the boycott has cost the gay-rights movement too much politically in exchange for comparatively few gains economically.

So much for the boycott; but it serves to consider anew at least one of the reasons why it hasn't been working: To a great extent, people in Colorado and beyond correctly sense that Amendment 2 simply isn't a judgment on homosexuality or an attempt to persecute it in any way.

The amendment is instead an earnest attempt to rein in runaway government. It's an effort to stop the prying, pushy powers that be from mandating an official view of "sexual orientation" in areas like employment and housing — long the rightful domain of private citizens. Probably most of the Coloradans who voted for Amendment 2 were in no way seeking to restrict any particular lifestyle, sexual or otherwise. This is why the gay-rights movement's argument that Amendment 2 "legislates morality" or somehow imposes religiosity was so disingenuous. The amendment, on hold pending a trial on its constitutionality, prevents the imposition of the views of one subculture on all of us.

Foisting some concocted gay-rights standard on society is in fact little different than the archaic "sodomy laws" that in turn restrict homosexuality in states like Georgia. Colorado has none.

Such laws on private, consenting sexual conduct are simply an unwarranted use of the criminal justice system. The point here isn't that these laws supposedly target purportedly oppressed "minorities" (in this case, homosexuals); rather, these laws are wrong because they barge into an area of human conduct that isn't the rightful role of government to regulate. Not only are sodomy laws practically unenforceable, but, like gay-rights mandates, they represent heavy-handed government at its most intrusive.

No level of government should be involved in setting standards for personal conduct in such areas. It must be left to individuals to choose the high road on these matters. Fundamentally, it is neither the place of government to restrict sexual conduct — if otherwise law-abiding — nor to require others to accept it.

Francisco Bar.

"It's a lot cheaper to settle it than it is to litigate it. You cannot assume they have something to hide."

But what if they do?

"The defense tries to buy you off by saying, 'We'll settle with you, but only on the condition that you don't tell anybody else,' " said William Smith, president of the San Francisco Trial

See **SECRECY**/F4

came public when news organizations sued.

■ Dozens of claims for death and injury against Shiley Inc. over its Bjork-Shiley convexo-concave heart valve were settled and sealed. The valves, with an internal part susceptible to fracture, were blamed for more than 200 deaths and crippling injuries.

Associated Press photos